

****ATTENTION****

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STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE

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MAKING YOUR YARD BETTER FOR WILDLIFE

Some people may be reluctant to enroll their yard as a backyard sanctuary because they think their yard is "not worthy" of the program. We believe the most important qualification for becoming a backyard manager is an attitude of caring and concern for wildlife. If you want to do more for wildlife in your yard, here are some things that you should consider:

1. Plant some additional trees and shrubs. The list of plants in this packet will give you many to consider. Don't be too concerned about which plants are best for wildlife; almost any plant that you add will make your yard better for birds. Quantity is more important than quality.

Be sure that the arrangement of plants is aesthetically pleasing to you. A background of tall trees (especially evergreens) with shorter deciduous trees and shrubs placed in front is very attractive. This is also the natural arrangement of plants found at forest "edges" where wildlife is especially abundant.

2. Add a birdbath or other source of water. A safe place to bathe and drink will attract many animals. Some of the references in this packet have ideas for inexpensive birdbaths.
3. Add bird feeders. The winter feeding information in this packet should give you ideas for different kinds of feeders and food to consider for your yard. A feeder for millet, one for sunflower seeds, and one for suet will appeal to a wide variety of birds.
4. Add a bird house. Cavity-nesting birds have been especially hurt by urban development. A bird house of the proper dimensions can help to replace the snags (dead trees) where these birds used to nest.
5. Cover any openings under the eaves or other places around your house where house sparrows and starlings may be nesting. These non-native birds are undesirable competitors for food and nesting cavities, and many native birds have suffered because of their presence. Bird houses and feeders should be designed and managed to reduce their use by house sparrows and starlings.
6. Control cats that may be prowling around your sanctuary. Your own cats should be kept indoors as much as possible, especially during the spring nesting season. Bell collars may also help. Cats of neighbors and feral cats need to be dealt with as overwhelming predators that are especially dangerous to ground-nesting and ground-feeding birds. If you request, we will send you a magazine article on the responsibilities of cat-keeping, written by a veterinarian with the National Humane Society.
7. Get your neighbors interested in backyard wildlife. Several adjacent yards with good wildlife resources will do much better than a single yard. Most wildlife species need areas larger than a single lot can provide. Remember, the collective actions of conscientious homeowners will help urban wildlife more than the activities of any professional wildlife manager.